

## House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

### **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE APPROVES UNDERAGE DRINKING BILL COSPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE FREY**



HARTFORD—The Legislature’s Judiciary Committee has approved legislation cosponsored by State Representative John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, that would make it illegal for people to allow underage drinking on private property. House Bill 5211, An Act Concerning Underage Drinking, now goes before the full House of Representatives for consideration.

Rep. Frey was an early cosponsor on HB 5211, which makes a first offense an infraction and subsequent offenses subject to up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$500, or both. According to the non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR), the bill also makes it illegal for a minor to possess alcohol anywhere, rather than only in public places. According to the Connecticut Coalition to Stop Underage Drinking, Connecticut is one of only eight states that allow possession of alcohol by minors on private property without the presence of a parent or adult guardian.

Under current law, the penalty for illegal possession in public places is a fine of \$200 to \$500. The bill makes this the penalty for second and subsequent offenses of illegal possession, regardless of location, and makes a first offense an infraction. The legislation would allow police to enter private property if they have evidence indicating that adults are hosting a party or allowing minors to possess alcohol in violation.

“In recent years, we’ve seen a noticeable increase in underage drinking on private property,” said Rep. Frey, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader. “While Ridgefield itself has a local ordinance with similar provisions, this legislation would permit law enforcement in every community to prosecute such offenses. Ridgefield police would also be able to prosecute under the bill.”

Among those testifying in favor of HB 5211 during a February 24 public hearing were Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, Chief State’s Attorney Christopher Morano and representatives from the State’s Victims Advocate Office, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Connecticut Police Chief’s Association.